



DELAWARE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS RELEASE

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“Slow Down and Pay Attention” **Work Zone Safety Awareness Week**

New Castle County — In 15 years of making the roadway work zone his office, Delaware Department of Transportation’s Bill Stewart has experienced and witnessed incidents that resulted in everything from minor to serious injuries and crashes.

“When behind the [safety] drums, a worker must always remember that tragedy could be just a split second away,” said Stewart, a civil engineer in DelDOT Pavement Management who works out of New Castle County. “In addition to monitoring the work being performed, I find myself constantly looking over my shoulder at passing traffic. The causes of crashes I have witnessed ranged from inattentive driving to impaired driving, and the memories of these work zone crashes are forever sobering.”

To recognize the challenging work of employees in DelDOT’s Traffic, Maintenance, Construction, Pavement, Planning and Bridge divisions and DelDOT contractors, the department is hosting two Work Zone Safety Awareness ceremonies on April 4. The first at 10 a.m. at the Route 202 and Weldin Road Connector in Wilmington, and the second at 2 p.m. on DelDOT’s Danner Campus on Bay Road in Dover. The events are part of Work Zone Safety Awareness Week, which runs from April 3-9. DelDOT is reminding travelers to drive with caution within work zones and respect the job and the lives of these men and women. The reason is due to these startling and frightening statistics:

- In Delaware in 2004, two workers were killed in crashes in or near work zones.
- Nationally, one work zone fatality occurs every seven hours.
- Nationally, one work zone injury occurs every 15 minutes.
- Four out of five work zone fatalities are motorists.

Speaking at the 2 p.m. event will be DelDOT Secretary Nathan Hayward III, while both events will feature workers sharing their personal experiences within the work zone.

Secretary Hayward said he hopes that drivers through work zones pay heed to the men and women working there.

“We can’t stress enough how important it is for drivers to slow down and pay attention,” Hayward said. “We must remember our workers have families, children who love them, and parents who are proud of them. This is more than about drivers obeying the law. It’s about respecting these people and the place they work in.”

Donna Hardy of Newark, DelDOT’s Safety Programs Engineer in the Traffic division, said it is her experience that drivers are so used to seeing construction on roadways that they pay little attention to work zones.

“At any given time 20 percent of roadways are under construction of some type, so when they encounter work, it doesn’t raise concerns to the driver,” Hardy said. “That’s when bad things happen. What we want to focus on

is when work zones are encountered, drivers must pay attention not only for their own safety but for the safety of the workers too.”

The job workers do is difficult enough without having to deal with speeding or inattentive drivers.

Len Brooks of Newark still shudders when he remembers the time several years ago when he was working on a construction project on I-95.

“It was 4 a.m. and I was pulling up barrels when I looked up and saw a vehicle speeding towards me,” said Brooks, a Safety Director at George & Lynch Inc., a construction company that does many road projects for DelDOT. “Somehow it missed me by only inches, but in a situation like that even if there is time to react, where do you go? I couldn’t do anything, and to this day that scene plays out in my mind like it was yesterday.”

Brooks and Stewart have more than their own safety to worry about. Each is married and has two children.

“I’ve seen workers hit, I’ve seen people driving that pay no attention to us,” said the 41-year-old Brooks. “We have families and people that love us. We ask drivers to respect us, slow down and pay attention.”

While DelDOT requires its employees to get regular work zone safety training, workers want to remind drivers that work zones are designed to warn motorists of upcoming hazards. When traveling through a work zone, please pay careful attention to the traffic control devices present.

- Warning signs will let you know what to expect.
- Drums or cones will delineate your path of travel.
- Flag persons will help direct you along the way. When you see the “orange and black”, please be extra cautious.
- Slow down and expect the unexpected.

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